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ABSTRACT

Comments and recommendations to promote excellence in the Pennsylvania state system of higher education are offered for the consideration of policy shapers and decisionmakers. The following topics are addressed: setting priorities and determining system goals; building public confidence; clarifying roles and responsibilities of the state system; assuring standards; enhancing the academic environment in a humane setting; providing lifelong continuing education and professional development; and improving quality in teacher education, including teacher preparation, teacher testing, and inservice training. Under the topic of assuring standards, attention is directed to the issues of admissions and retention, general education, and competency requirements. Specific recommendations include: assure that resource allocation does not depend strictly on enrollment; work cooperatively with the secondary schools in preparing students for college; admit underprepared students and assist them to perform college-level work; review general education to strengthen present requirements; develop departmental tests to supplement institutional measures; use flexible and innovative alternative learning experiences; and relate programs of study and research to the needs of the community. (SW)

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EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
A Call for Action

Comments and Recommendations

by

The APSCUF Committee on Quality
in Higher Education

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ASSOCIATION OF PENNSYLVANIA STATE
COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY FACULTIES

EXCELLENCE IN PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION
A Call for Action

Comments and Recommendations

by

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PREFACE

During the last two years, numerous studies have appeared examining the status of education in America. For the most part, these studies have concentrated on basic education and have raised questions about the quality of what educators have been doing. Surprisingly, with the exception of teacher preparation, higher education has been only peripherally a subject of these national studies. Some universities and faculty organizations have responded in a more or less ad hoc manner, but with none of the consistency or urgency of that shown in the basic education community.

In Pennsylvania, the 4,500 faculty of the publicly-owned universities, the State System of Higher Education, are represented by the Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties (APSCUF), which since the 1930's has represented the professional, academic, and legislative interests of the faculty. Since 1971, APSCUF has been the voice of the faculty in collective bargaining matters as well. Last fall, as directed by its governing body, APSCUF created a Committee on Quality in Higher Education, charged with the responsibility for reviewing a variety of academic and professional concerns that directly relate to improving the quality of the educational system and for improving the educational environment of the State System Universities.

The commentary and recommendations which follow should be viewed as forming the basis of a "working draft" that will be modified from time to time, since the subjects under consideration will be reviewed regularly and assessed by the Association. We do invite and challenge our colleagues within the university and the policy-makers within the Commonwealth to a lively debate on the subjects contained in this report. As a result of such exchanges, we can look forward to a continuing effort to improve the quality of education provided by the public universities.

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of Pennsylvania

INTRODUCTION

Nearly one year ago the National Commission on Excellence in Education told the American people that because of weaknesses in their education system they were "a nation at risk." Today the Association of Pennsylvania State Colleges and University Faculties (APSCUF) turns its attention to defining quality in public higher education in the Commonwealth. Elected in 1971 as the collective voice of the faculty in the State System of Higher Education (SSHE), APSCUF historically has been committed to providing affordable quality education for the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. For this reason we assume a leadership role in the state to add our perspective to those others who are defining and demanding excellence in public higher education.

We further believe, along with the National Commission on Excellence in Education, that excellence at the university level means setting high expectations and goals for all learners--which implies attempting in all reasonable ways to help our students reach those goals and expectations. For each person "excellence means performing on the boundary of individual ability in ways that test and push back personal limits, in college and in the workplace."[1] To reach the goal of assisting students to develop their talents, we must expect and assist them to work to the limits of their capabilities. Furthermore, students must be committed to the task of learning. Additionally, our efforts need to be supported by Pennsylvanians who demand adequate resources for quality education.

While tax dollars have been too few to fund adequately all the Commonwealth's needs, including education, the State System has attempted to maintain standards of quality in its academic and student programs. But there are growing indications that quality standards are being jeopardized and eroded. Many of our students are deficient in the academic skills that are necessary for their success in college. It is also increasingly apparent that our university degrees do not always certify that those who receive them are men and women of learning.

Americans in the 21st century will continue to need the basic skills of reading, writing, speaking, listening, and mathematics. Beyond that they also will need broad communication abilities, higher problem-solving skills, scientific and technological literacy, and a social and an aesthetic sense. All the tools required to comprehend the ever more complex world must be provided to all students--not just those few for whom college education is an economic and social tradition.

If we are to meet the needs of the age, there must be consistent, concerted, and sustained leadership from the Board of Governors, the Chancellor, the campus Trustees, the University Presidents, the University administrators, and the faculty. Equally important to our success is the need for a continuing and adequate fiscal commitment from the Commonwealth.

APSCUF offers the following comments and recommendations as catalysts for enhancing excellence in the State System. We particularly are concerned with issues that are related specifically to raising standards in public higher education and with strengthening public support for our endeavors. Where quality and support already are evident in the State System, they must be protected and nurtured.

Our recommendations, addressed to policy shapers and decision makers, are presented as examples of the kinds of standards and strategies that must be pursued; hence, they are not argued elaborately. Nor is each of our suggestions equally appropriate for all fourteen State System universities. APSCUF felt a sense of urgency and therefore limited this report to a few salient issues.

Setting Priorities and Determining System Goals

Comments

Perhaps the greatest danger to excellence in public higher education in the 1980's is inadequate legislative funding. Public higher education in Pennsylvania has been short-changed for much of the past decade. Between 1977 and 1983, yearly state appropriations have fluctuated from 1.3% to 7.6%. During a period when the general price index nearly doubled, the general appropriation grew from $169 million in 1976 to $235 million in 1982, a 38% increase.

This level of Commonwealth support places quality programs in the State System at risk. The programs at the universities serve the many varied educational needs of students, but because of insufficient funding, enrollment in many programs and courses must be restricted severely despite student demand. A substantial reduction in quality will result if we are forced to make further cutbacks.

The State System traditionally has offset low funding by raising student fees so that tuition at the campuses of the State System now ranks among the highest in the nation. From 1976 to 1982 tuition grew from $800 to $1,480 an increase of 85%.

Financial stringencies also have caused faculty and staff salary increases to lag behind inflation. Indeed, salary increases for faculty in the State System have not kept pace with nationwide increases nor even with increases granted other Commonwealth employees. Without adequate salary incentives it is extremely difficult to recruit let alone retain good faculty.

Even our physical plants are deteriorating rapidly due to postponed maintenance and repairs. Such false economy leads to substantial costs later.

Inadequate funding affects not only educational quality, it is also a key to the economic prosperity of the Commonwealth. A November, 1981, Pennsylvania Economy League study demonstrated that "Every dollar Pennsylvanians invest in their colleges or universities returns $1.70 to the state's economy. The $.70 net return adds about $1.7 billion annually to Pennsylvania's economy."[2]

Unlike the private colleges the State System does not possess a separate reserve to use in times of tight money. We are uniquely dependent upon the Commonwealth for our economic viability. The overall quality of our universities can improve if future budgets for the State System are substantially increased.

Recommendations

* In addition to stable funding, the greatest contribution the State System can make to promote excellence is to assure that allocation mechanisms do not depend strictly on enrollment. Formulas based on enrollments provide little incentive to improve programs.

* Excellence and efficiency can be achieved when each institution is allowed the freedom to expend its funds consistent with the approved academic missions of the universities.

* Councils of Trustees, administrations, and faculties at each institution should continually review mission statements, and regularly revise institutional priorities and plans. Resource allocation at each university should reflect these priorities.

Building Public Confidence

Comments

Public awareness of our educational missions and the understanding and acceptance of our potential depend on what the State System does to inform others of what we do. The public continues to believe that the universities are primarily teacher-training colleges despite the fact that the institutions diversified their programs decades ago. An enlightened promotion effort will build the public confidence and understanding that is essential for the future success of the State System.

Recommendations

* The Board of Governors and the Chancellor's office must take the lead in articulating and promoting public higher education.

* As we plan for the future, there must be regular interaction with members of the General Assembly so that they are informed about the value and programs of the State System.

* A study of the role of alumni, public information, and development offices ought to be undertaken with the aim of strengthening their capacities to promote public awareness and confidence in the State System.

* It is vital that the universities, aided and supported by the Chancellor's office, stimulate cultural and educational activities especially in the surrounding communities. At the same time, each institution should assume an active role in providing leadership for its home communities.

Roles and Responsibilities of the State System

Comments

Ideally, the Chancellor's office, the Board of Governors, and the universities should work together to facilitate local initiative, communication, cooperation, and collaboration. The role of the Chancellor's office should be one of active support, protection, recognition, and conflict management. It is important that there be interaction between and among the State System and the campuses.

If excellence is to prevail in the university setting, individual motivation must be encouraged and supported. Undue supervision hinders such motivation. Thus, while it may seem efficient to employ directives and budget controls to standardize procedures and to integrate programs, such an approach, if arbitrarily employed, thwarts excellence among professionals.

Recommendations

The following activities are suggested:

* Develop a statement of philosophy for the State System that unites the universities in their common missions while simultaneously recognizing the individuality of each university;

* Promote a relationship of mutual respect and high regard with the legislature;

* Ensure an equitable distribution of financial, personnel, and physical resources;

* Employ the technology of modern communication to facilitate the sharing of ideas among the universities;

* Act as a clearing house for ideas from other systems of higher education;

* Establish a system-wide university press for disseminating scholarly achievements;

* Pursue collaborative ventures with schools, governments, businesses, service organizations, and foundations;

* Invite the suggestions of citizen groups, legislators, accreditation and certification associations;

* Encourage local campuses to be innovative in program review and development and to strengthen those programs already identified as high quality and those where potential exists for quality growth. Experimental programs and pilot projects should be encouraged in order to benefit from innovation; and

* Protect the flexibility each campus needs to serve its surrounding communities.

Assuring Standards

Comments

Educated citizens are the Commonwealth's greatest asset for maintaining and promoting its social and economic vitality. They are also its most important catalyst for growth. The founders of the Commonwealth's system of higher education recognized this when they established the state-owned colleges over a century ago.

In like manner, we today must be concerned about the availability and quality of public higher education in Pennsylvania. But at the same time we do not want to dictate conformity to standards created by the State System. The strength of the State System lies in its diversity and in the flexibility of each university to experiment and to implement its own programs. APSCUF has no desire to urge recommendations that would undermine campus flexibility. All educational standards should, however, guarantee the integrity of the academic program, while providing all potential students with opportunities for high quality education at a reasonable cost.

Under this topic of Assuring Standards we address the issues of (1) Admissions and Retention, (2) General Education, and (3) Competency Requirements.

Admissions and Retention

Comments

The great historic mission of public higher education in America has been to provide quality education to all students motivated to learn. The State System must continue to provide educational opportunities to all citizens, while recognizing its historic role in recruiting and educating those from low and middle incomes.

As we are forced to compete for a dwindling number of traditional students, so we are called upon to extend the benefits of university education to social and economic groups too often excluded from higher education. Therefore, the universities must improve the skills and bolster the confidence of the underprepared student but, at the same time, must attract and keep the superior student. These efforts must be made concurrently so that "quality" and "excellence" do not mean the exclusion of the economically disadvantaged or underprepared student.

A commitment to remedial education is right and proper at this time in Pennsylvania's system of public higher education. But successful implementation of remedial education requires adequate university support for those faculty engaged in this enterprise.

Recommendations

* The Chancellor's office, in conjunction with the universities, should develop a broad admissions philosophy for the State System. This philosophy should address admissions standards and yet retain the flexibility for each university to adjust its admissions policies according to its own needs.

* Admissions policies should be based on the student's potential and eagerness to learn.

* Admissions standards should be revised to require one year of oral communication, four years of high school English, mathematics (including algebra and statistics), science (including chemistry and physics), and one semester of computer science.

* The State System should work cooperatively with the secondary schools in preparing their students for college. They should include guidelines for academic work needed to form the foundation for college-level work. We suggest that the guidelines include the basic competencies and subjects as stated by the Education EQuality Project of the College Board.[3] The competencies include reading, writing, speaking and listening, mathematics, reasoning, and studying. The subjects are English, speech, the arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and foreign languages.

* It should be the continuing policy of the State System to identify and recruit minority students. It is also the State System's responsibility to provide such students with the proper environment for learning.

* For the immediate future the universities must be prepared to admit underprepared students and to commit the necessary resources to assist these students to perform college-level work. Remedial education carries with it the responsibility on the part of the institution to support those students who enter the program. Funding from appropriate external sources should be sought to help maintain remedial programs.

* Underprepared students must be told directly what quantity and quality of work is expected of them and how much time will be needed generally to prepare for college-level courses and degree programs. Students unwilling to expend the necessary effort should not be carried in the program any longer than necessary, both for their own good and that of others.

* Each university must ensure that departments involved in remedial education be staffed adequately and, where appropriate, that individual faculty who are involved in remedial education possess the needed skills.

* The Chancellor's office and the universities must promote and expand those high-quality programs known to attract bright students. Additional funding should be sought from both the Commonwealth and from external sources to provide support for talented students.

* The universities should work more closely with junior and senior high school guidance counselors to acquaint them with the programs and opportunities available in the State System.

General Education

Comments

General education means an appreciation and knowledge of social values and cultures; establishment and maintenance of ethical values, health, and physical fitness; understanding the nature of physical and biological sciences; appreciating the arts; and grasping the idea of knowledge as an end in itself. General education should emphasize the ability to think abstractly, critically, analytically, and constructively; to write and speak effectively; to understand and use efficient means of acquiring knowledge; to exercise good judgment; and to assume the responsibility for one's own learning.

Citizens need to understand and appreciate their own culture and values as well as those of others. In addition, people need to understand the impact of science and technology on their lives. Since educational specialization has increased in recent years, it is all the more important that students gain awareness and insight into the world around them.

General education must stress the idea that increasing one's knowledge is a worthwhile endeavor; it must clarify the differences and similarities between our culture and others; it must instill a sense of commitment to one's self as well as a civic responsibility for a democratic society.

Recommendations

* The Chancellor's office and each university should undertake a comprehensive review of general education with the aim of strengthening present requirements and developing new approaches that facilitate their goals;

* The universities should provide their students, regardless of their curricula, opportunities for developing a rich background of general education which will increase their appreciation and knowledge of the physical universe, of social and democratic values, and of personal worth;

* The universities should inculcate the habits of thinking critically, analytically, and constructively; writing and speaking effectively; and of exercising sound judgment;

* On each campus there should be an atmosphere in which students, faculty, and administrators are joined in a common endeavor to ensure intellectual freedom, to promote self-realization, to encourage initiative, and to instill responsibility;

* Each university should stress the use of libraries and other information centers as resources for learning;

* Each university should develop inter-disciplinary curricula that generate an understanding of the nature of the inter-dependent, physically complex, and culturally diverse world in which we live;

* The universities should provide a global perspective so that as citizens our alumni will be aware and more understanding of the complex web of world cultures and nations;

* Each university should ensure competence in foreign languages; and

* Where new curricula and programs are needed, sufficient resources must be made available to generate such programs.

Competency Requirements

Comments

Areas of competency should include, but not necessarily be limited to, writing, reading, speaking, reasoning and critical thinking, mathematics, knowledge of methods of inquiry, awareness of self and the world, and self-initiated learning. These competencies are such that they are included in but transcend all disciplines and basic subjects and may, therefore, be measured by means of standard testing prior to graduation.

Recommendations

* Academic departments should be encouraged to develop standard tests for their own disciplines as a way of supplementing institutional measures.

* The Chancellor, in concert with the universities, should initiate a study to determine an appropriate comprehensive examination policy for general use in the State System.

Enhancing the Academic Environment in a Humane Setting

Comments

Among our staff and students are good minds that have done and will continue to do thoroughly sound academic and creative work. We need to foster intellectual vitality, not only in classrooms, but throughout the campus and beyond. We need to improve the image of ourselves as professionals, and as a system of higher education. We need to create an exciting scholarly atmosphere that will encourage students to join us in the quest for excellence. Also, we need to recognize that our students, most of whom are far from affluent and regard a university education as utilitarian, have the potential for responding to learning as an end in itself.

We need to create an atmosphere of pride in academic achievement and a climate of intellectual vigor. There are measures which, if adopted, will create an environment of respect for ideas--an environment not of repressive competition and pressure, but one which challenges the individual's conception of self and the world.

Recommendations

* The universities should provide more recognition for faculty who have distinguished themselves in their fields.

* The scholarly activities of faculty, students, and alumni should be publicized routinely by each university.

* There should be more departmental, college, and university-wide methods for timely reward and recognition of student accomplishments. Students who have received awards for academic achievement should be acknowledged in university publications.

* Each university should provide more enrichment for outstanding students. Honors programs should be emphasized. Provision should be made for honoraria at the departmental or program level. Publication of an undergraduate journal may be appropriate.

* The universities should be more flexible and innovative in the development and approval of alternative learning experiences, including but not limited to team-taught and inter-disciplinary teaching.

* Each university should routinely promote cultural events, both on and off campus, so as to increase participation and enhance out-of-class learning.

* Each university should extend academic concerns and support into all aspects of campus life. For example, provide suitable housing accommodations for students with similar academic interests.

* At each university faculty and students should be encouraged to interact frequently in career-oriented programs, seminars, and social activities;

* The universities should re-emphasize faculty advisement of student organizations and activities;

* Each university should encourage offices and other facilities with frequent student and public contact to maintain greater flexibility in their business hours;

* The universities should make greater efforts to increase funds for the student payroll, and provide for work-study arrangements for part-time students. This would encourage students to become more involved with the university and to identify with the institution.

Lifelong Continuing Education

Comments

Technological and social changes occur so rapidly in modern society that it is no longer sufficient to focus education only on our youth. All people should have opportunities to develop their full potential. Successful lifelong education programs need to be conceived as learning networks that integrate schools, universities, libraries, the mass media, work- and leisure-related activities.

Lifelong learning is more than a simple catch phrase. It has meaning and importance to the individual and to society, and it is the responsibility of the universities to promote this mode of education.

Recommendations

In order to encourage the development of continuing education within the State System, the universities should:

* provide adequate financial support for non-traditional learning;

* expand the variety of students whom they serve;

* explore cooperative ventures with the media and other members of lifelong-learning networks;

* relate programs of study and research to the needs of the community through new designs for credit courses and degree programs, electives at non-traditional hours, and the "weekend college" as alternative forms of education for working citizens.

Professional Development

Comments

We believe that much more can be done to encourage professional growth. Professional development involves the sum of those endeavors which enhance the ability of the faculty to teach and do research, administrators to function, and the university to be a truly collegiate body.

For faculty, professional development means being effective in the classroom through the exploration of new methods of instruction and in keeping up to date in one's field. It also involves sharpening the ability to generate, manage, and apply knowledge; sharing research findings through participation in workshops, seminars, panels, and publications; displaying creative and aesthetic productions; and providing service to government, business, and private organizations.

Professional development should also incorporate a better understanding of and sensitivity to the great variety of careers that are available to the student. Career development must be made an integral part of the education process.

Professional development includes participating in policy-making bodies, internships, consultantships, and in academic accrediting and professional organizations. Meaningful professional activity requires adequate compensation and recognition for services performed.

The relative decline in real income, the reduction in support for research opportunities, and the diminution of travel and professional development monies have affected adversely professional growth as well as morale. Inadequate support for professional activity makes it difficult to attract and retain many talented people, particularly in fields where academic salaries are low compared to those in the private sector. We fear that low morale will undercut the academic enterprise, encourage "moonlighting" in second and third jobs, and cause faculty to withdraw from active and productive involvement in university and professional activities. The resulting threat to excellence and quality is clear.

Finally, professional development provides a way for universities to meet changing needs by allowing some faculty and staff to retrain for programs apart from their usual assignments.

Recommendations

* The State System should create a professional development leave policy.

* While inflation and equity considerations justify salary increases according to time in rank, nevertheless, high-quality performance should be supported by programs and policies that take into account individual contributions of significance.

* The universities and the State System should provide incentives for faculty and staff tc engage in professional development, including adequate support to participate in conferences.

* Inasmuch as effective teaching is closely allied with research, there should be sufficient funding, release time, and travel to enhance faculty performance.

* Sabbatical leaves should be granted with much greater frequency and flexibility than is now the case.

* Because overload assignments inhibit professional development, they should be held to a minimum by employing additional staff as needed.

* While the Collective Bargaining Agreement provides for adequate and workable procedures for evaluation of faculty, the State System should develop regular procedures for evaluating academic administrators with participation by faculty and staff. The evaluations should be timely and thorough and should promote the professional development of those under review.

* Faculty should recognize that they have a responsibility for the quality of one another's performance. To that end, APSCUF should take the lead in reviewing and strengthening procedures for evaluating faculty. Where a support system of peer assistance does not exist, such a program should be established at each university.

* Ways should be found to enhance career development programs on the fourteen campuses, involving placement and counselling centers.

* The universities and the State System, where appropriate, should encourage and support retraining through increased resources for out-service training.

Improving Quality in Teacher Education

Comments

Serious concern for the quality of our future teachers continues to mount. Not only has the performance of prospective teachers dropped on a variety of test measures, but recent changes in the status and opportunities for talented women and minorities have reduced the pool of candidates for the school classrooms.

As a system that prepares more than half of the Commonwealth's teachers, we are responding to recent reports that have emphasized the critical need to improve the quality of our teachers. Recruiting and educating the best possible teachers involves many factors other than their college training, but it is this training for which the

universities are responsible. We are committed to the support of our many fine teacher preparation programs and to their continued improvement.

The solution to the problems that confront the teaching profession requires more than accepting the slogan "raise the standards." Indeed, undue concentration on standard setting will guarantee failure for our schools of education and increase the perception that the schools of education deserve the lion's share of the blame for the declining quality of prospective teachers. Responsible government agencies, school boards, parents, and administrators must address the conditions that deter students from entering teaching: low salary, poor working conditions, little opportunity for advancement, and inadequate community support. APSCUF therefore chooses to treat the issue of teacher preparation comprehensively so as to recognize a mutual dependency between initial recruitment, high standards, curricular programs, and career-long interaction with college-level faculties.

Any position on how to recruit better teaching candidates and improve the quality of teacher education must rest on some definition of what teaching is. We should reject conceptions of the profession that reduce teaching to lists of competencies, the copying of an individual mentor's style, the simple repetition of the practices at hand, or mere expertise in subject matter.

Teaching is complex: It requires knowledge of subject matter, to be sure, but it also requires comprehensive knowledge of how people learn, of child development, of the different ways to explain and elicit reactions, of the place of school in society, of philosophies of education, of problem-solving strategies, of managing learning in classroom settings, of knowing when to discipline and when to cajole. The excellent teacher must have an understanding of these elements and an aptitude for applying them in a variety of situations.

The preparation of teachers is a complicated and demanding process as well. The best teachers will be those who come to teacher training with strong academic credentials, who pursue a course of study that is challenging with respect to both substance and technique, and who obtain an early teaching experience which is accompanied by the sound counsel and support of seasoned teaching professionals.

A critical aspect of declining teacher quality in Pennsylvania has been the failure to retain experienced and competent professionals who leave teaching just as they approach the gateway to their most productive years.

Attracting quality students into teacher education programs depends upon a variety of factors beyond the purview of the universities. Excellent students are more likely to enter teaching if high standards are rewarded and if financial incentives are available.

Recommendations

* The State System and the Commonwealth need to assist in the recruitment of students to the teaching profession by underwriting more generous aid programs. Specific scholarship and loan programs should be aimed at meritcrious students. The Commonwealth's loan program, for example, which cancels the student's debt in return for a specified number of years of teaching service, should be substantially enlarged and expanded.

* In order to retain public school teachers, public policy should support reduced teaching loads, smaller class sizes, fewer non-teaching responsibilities, more career options, and financial support for academic and professional development.

* Concerted efforts should be made within the fourteen universities to lend higher status and prestige to teacher education programs.

Teacher Preparation Programs

Comments

Recent criticisms of teacher quality have centered on charges that teachers are not as qualified in subject areas as the public has a right to expect. Historically, there has been a tension between advocates of more subject matter for teachers and those who argue for additional professional educational courses. Currently, most teacher education programs are based on a four-year college sequence that includes subject matter study, methods courses, and student teaching. Pressures are growing to increase the amount of time spent on subject matter at the expense of methods or professional courses. To be sure, there is a place for both in any sound teacher preparation program.

Recommendations

* The universities regularly should evaluate and update their programs and commit the necessary resources to ensure the quality of teacher preparation programs.

* Every teacher should have a solid background in such professional courses as philosophy and history of education, educational psychology and learning theories, child development, classroom management, and instructional methods and their consequences.

* An effective teacher preparation program must include a sound academic program of general education, and an area of academic specialization and professional studies including field experience.

* Good teacher preparation should include a substantial period of internship following completion of a college program and preliminary certification.

* A greater emphasis should be put on understanding and use of computers and other technology for educational purposes.

* The question of substituting more subject matter courses for some methods courses in the typical four-year programs should be reviewed thoroughly.

* The State System and the universities should encourage and support active research on learning and teaching effectiveness. In addition, faculty need to be involved in real life, school-related responsibilities. Innovative means must be found to allow faculty the time necessary to become involved to a greater extent with the local schools.

Teacher Testing

Comments

While great strides are now being made in the accurate evaluation of classroom teaching, much of the art of teaching is difficult to measure. APSCUF supports the use of examinations as a means of improving the quality of teacher education candidates. We believe, however, there should be cautious efforts in this area.

Recommendations

* All prospective teachers should be required to pass a subject matter and general knowledge test reflective of national standards.

* We urge, however, that the universities, in close cooperation with the Chancellor's office, carefully study exit testing and its implications before such testing is adopted.

* Any tests that are adopted should be developed and administered by the individual universities and used in combination with other assessment procedures. State-wide testing should not be implemented at this time.

Inservice Training

Comments

Keeping abreast of new knowledge in one's subject and learning about the latest changes in teaching methodologies are vital for good teaching. We believe, therefore, that our teacher education programs should instill in prospective teachers an expectation of career-long professional growth.

Recommendations

* We urge that the universities collaborate with the schools in joint projects and that a clearinghouse be established within the State System to facilitate sharing and cooperation among all components of public education in the Commonwealth.

* The universities should provide an appropriate forum, such as on-campus professional days, for discussion of common concerns. Education can improve as teachers become familiar with available resources, and interact with faculty and staff in the solution of mutual problems.

* A particular emphasis should be made to acquaint practicing teachers with applications of the latest technology. Schools should provide incentives, such as released time, to encourage teachers to pursue post-baccalaureate study.

IMPLEMENTATION

To serve the educational goals of the Commonwealth and the advancement of learning at the universities, the role of the Chancellor's office should encompass and transcend the legal mandates of Act 188.

We commend the State System for establishing a strategic planning and policy committee; in a similar vein, we call for campus as well as system-wide task forces to implement the recommendations of this report. Each task force should be broadly constituted, should include faculty, and, as appropriate, should be assigned a staff person from the Chancellor's office.

Each task force should include among its duties: the gathering of information, suggesting a philosophy, and proposing models for improvements. Immediate needs are for task forces on admissions, general education, teacher training, and professional programs.

We recommend consultation between state-level academic planners and local campus planners to ensure excellence in the education of the students in our universities in the decades ahead.

LOOKING AHEAD

The continuing welfare of Pennsylvania and its people is tied inextricably to the future of the State System of Higher Education. In an increasingly information-based society, the importance of this relationship can only grow. Recent decades have witnessed sharp expansion in our university enrollments, institutional budgets, and educational programs. This growth has been no accident, since complex technological societies need equally complex higher education resources. Prosperity in this Commonwealth, therefore, rests upon a healthy higher education system.

APSCUF's focused agenda for continued qualitative growth is reasonable and obtainable. It calls upon the constituent elements of the State System to promote the State System's welfare and to address the strengthening of its quality. Acting on the Association's recommendations, the State System can attain a greater sense of purpose and forward movement. Most critically, students and society will benefit from these modest but firm agenda.

APSCUF offers its recommendations in the firm belief that the State System of Higher Education can participate effectively in the leadership of our Commonwealth. In the agenda offered, academicians confront significant opportunities to benefit our citizenry and, at the same time, to gain a renewed sense of direction and dedication for themselves.

> All of us in higher education should give increased attention to the quality of our educational endeavors: quality in instruction, quality in research, quality in creative expression, quality in public service, quality in educational justice, quality in constructive criticism. . . . Quality is our justification for existence. Quality is our eternal quest, [Let it not be] our impossible dream.[4]

Endnotes

[1] National Commission on Excellence in Education. Nation at Risk [Washington, DC: U. S. Department of Education] April 1983, p. 12.

[2] "Economic Impact of Higher Education on Pennsylvania", p. 4.

[3] Academic Preparation for College. New York: The College Board, 1983.

[4] Millett, John D. The States Face Issues of Quality in Higher Education. U. S. Educational Resources Information Center, ERIC Document ED 177960, 1979.